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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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Housekeepers' Chat

Wednesday, October 8, 1930.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Sleep and the School Child." Information from Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor. Menu from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Why Sleep?" U. S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, Folder No. 11. (All requests for this leaflet should be sent, as usual, to the Radio Service, U. S. D. A.)

Billy was obstreperous last night. He wanted to go to a show. That being checked off the list, he wanted to go visiting. Evening visits being frowned upon by those "higher up," Billy suggested that I play a game of miniature golf with him.

"What's the matter with you, Billy?" I asked, finally. "School boys should go to bed early. You should get plenty of sleep. You should not stay up late, and waste the best part of the night playing around. You should know that, Billy, by this time."

"Good gracious, Aunt Sammy," said Billy, "you surely are in a should mood tonight! Daddy-on-a-choo-choo-train! Should, should, should -- and a big load of wood. Well, if I can't go to a show, and I can't go over to Jimmy's, and you won't play golf with me, I guess I'll go -- to -- bed. Gee, I'm sleepy already! Good-night, Aunt Sammy. And don't forget that you should have scrambled eggs and bacon for breakfast, for school boys should eat a good breakfast."

"Hey, young man," said Uncle Ebenezer, mildly, glancing up from his newspaper. "Are you still talking? You should have been in bed half an hour ago."

Billy laughed. "Uncle Ebenezer belongs to your Should club, Aunt Sammy. Good-night, all."

Having delivered his final words after the manner of a famous radio speaker, Billy disappeared from view, and I continued to read your letters. One question that struck my fancy was this one: "Dear Aunt Sammy: One of the biggest problems in our home has always been how to get the children to bed at a proper bedtime. Is there any way to tell whether a child is getting the right kind and amount of sleep?"

Yes, there are signs by which you may know that your child is getting enough sleep. If he is well grown, if he has firm muscles, rounded outlines, erect posture, a rosy skin, clear eyes without circles under them, a happy disposition, and a good appetite, he is probably getting the right kind and amount of sleep.

As every modern mother knows, enough sound sleep is one of the three essentials for a child's health; the other two are right food, and outdoor play in the sun. These three essentials depend on one another. If a child gets plenty of simple food, and vigorous outdoor play in the sun, he is likely to sleep well. But if his diet is improper, and he sits around all day, he may sleep poorly.

There is another question which mothers often ask: "How much should a child sleep?"

The faster a child is growing, the more sleep he needs. A baby less than a year old grows very fast, and therefore sleeps most of the time. When he gets a little older, he does not grow so fast, and therefore does not need so much sleep. After about a dozen years, when the child enters the adolescent stage, growth speeds up again, and he needs even more sleep than the child a year or two younger. Many parents do not know this, and they permit these older children to stay up later than the younger ones. I know it's hard to make children around the ages of 13, 14 and 15 believe that they need 10 to 12 hours of sleep, just as it is hard to make them believe they are not yet grown up. As a result of loss of time, boys and girls 13 to 15 are often listless and tired most of the time, and unable to concentrate on their lessons.

Here's another question we'd better answer today. "We do a great deal of entertaining," writes this mother, "and sometimes it is very inconvenient for us to put our young son to bed early. Do you think that being up late, say one or two evenings a week, could actually harm the child?"

It probably could. If you accustom your child to a regular bedtime, from infancy, you help his chances for normal development of body and mind, and you also simplify your own problems of child management, for, as years pass, your child will continue to go quietly and unquestioningly to bed. The early bedtime habit -- 6 o'clock during infancy and not later than 7 during early childhood -- should be unbroken.

Better not keep him up to entertain visitors, or go to the movies. It is unwise to give in to a child who begs to stay up "just this one time." Permitting him to lose sleep leads to a vicious circle: Loss of sleep makes him irritable and over-active, and overactivity makes him restless and wakeful, so that on following evenings it becomes harder and harder to get him to go to bed. On the other hand, a child who goes to bed tranquilly is likely to sleep well, and to be easy to manage the next day.

One more question, and then the menu. The last question is about children who go to bed readily enough, but stay awake, or sleep fitfully. There may be several reasons for fitful sleep.

Has the child had enough active play during the day to tire his muscles? Is his physical condition good? Does he have a bed to himself? Is the bed comfortable? The spring and mattress should be firm and flat, not sagging in the middle. If a pillow is used, it should be thin, and not too soft. Sheets should be large, so that the edges will stay tucked in all night; the blankets light in weight, and wide enough to keep out drafts. For the child who kicks off the covers, try a sleeping bag.

Are the child's nightclothes comfortable? They should be loose, so that there is no binding. Of course the child should be entirely undressed before his night clothes are put on.

Is the room at a comfortable temperature? Is there plenty of fresh air from open windows? Is the child's supper satisfying, and easily digested? Do you try to prevent loud or sudden noises from reaching the child's room? His bedroom should be as far as possible from the radio.

Before we leave the subject of sleep, I want to mention an excellent leaflet which has been published recently by the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor. This leaflet is called "Why Sleep?" I shall be very glad to send you a copy of this leaflet.

Now let's concentrate on dinner. The Menu Specialist must have known this was a children's program, for she has planned a dinner which is ideal for children and for their parents, too.

This is the menu: Baked Tomato and Macaroni; Quick-cooked Spinach; Graham Muffins; and Baked Peaches.

The recipe for the Graham Muffins is in the Radio Cookbook, but I shall broadcast this small recipe for those who do not have a Radio Cookbook. Seven ingredients, for Graham Muffins:

1 cup milk.	1 egg.
1-1/2 cups coarse Graham flour	2 tablespoons baking powder.
or 1-3/4 cups more finely	1 to 2 tablespoons sugar, and
ground Graham.	1/2 teaspoon salt.
2 to 4 tablespoons fat.	

Seven ingredients, for Graham Muffins: (Repeat).

Do not sift the Graham flour before measuring. Mix all the dry ingredients thoroughly. Beat the egg slightly and add it to the milk. Stir the combined milk and egg into the dry ingredients. Add the melted butter or other fat last. Bake the muffins in a hot oven (about 400° to 425° F.)

Baked Peaches are a delicious dessert. We had them for dinner last night, and I made the mistake of not having enough.

"Oh, Daddy-on-a-choo-choo-train!" said Billy, "Let's have Baked Peaches all week!"

Here's how to cook them: Select large yellow peaches, pare them, and cut them in halves. Place in a shallow pan, pit side up. Sprinkle lightly with sugar, dot with butter, and add a little salt. Broil under a flame or bake in the oven until the peaches are tender and lightly browned.

Our menu, once more: Baked Tomato and Maxaroni; Quick-cooked Spinach; Graham Muffins; and Baked Peaches.

Tomorrow: "Wash Day in the Modern Manner."

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